

SECRET POLICING EXPOSED

EXCLUSIVE

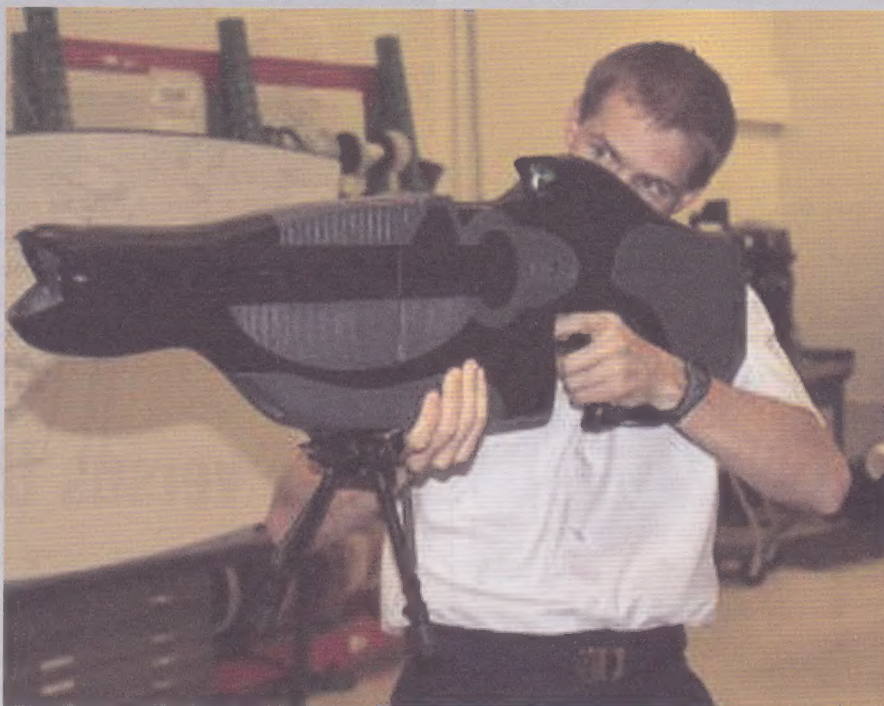
Police admit in court to compiling a massive database on political activists

Forward Intelligence Teams (FIT) have been a familiar sight at demonstrations for years, and many activists have had first hand experience of their particular brand of harassment and intimidation. Although it is well known that they keep data on 'known' activists, including photos for their 'spotter cards', the full details of how extensive their database is, and how that data is used, is only just beginning to surface.

The latest piece in the puzzle came from the trial of three FITwatch activists who were last week convicted of obstruction. FITwatch had disrupted FIT data gathering on a Palestinian solidarity demonstration in January, and interrupted the filming of a group of Asian lads FIT had been followed by FIT.

Giving evidence at the trial, PS Rooney, a well known FIT regular, said they had been following the group for more than 15 minutes, but had still not got the shots they needed –
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LENS CAP PROTESTORS WATCH OUT!



The research arm of the US Department of Justice is working on two portable non-lethal weapons that inflict pain from a distance using beams of laser light or microwaves, with the intention of putting them into the hands of police to subdue suspects. .

SOCIAL CENTRE EVICTION

Residents of the newly opened Social Centre at Pisgah House, Sheffield, moved out of the premises on 7th October rather than be forcibly removed after receiving an eviction threat and summons for a possession order hearing brought against them by the University of Sheffield, who own the property.

At the court hearing a plea was presented in defence of the residents, countering the arguments made in the witness statement to the court, but was not able to challenge the possessions claim. The judge eventually granted the order as well as awarding costs and damages, including a request for £20,000 in legal fees, against the occupiers.

Previously local residents had defeated a planning application by property developers Miller Homes to demolish all of the buildings

on the site of Pisgah House and the surrounding Tapton Experimental Gardens.

Despite only being open for a short time, the centre had already accumulated a full calendar of events, which included a host of political group and discussion meetings, practical workshops, film showings and benefit gigs for various causes.

The social centre set out to be a non-hierarchical, anti-capitalist space based on a number of core principles reflecting the world its organisers wanted to see: co-operation and mutual aid, openness and inclusion, voluntary participation and shared responsibility.

The occupiers have since found an alternative venue and are determined to continue this project offering free and accessible political space in the community.

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NEWS

IN BRIEF

G20 ARREST SHOCK: A police officer is to be charged with assaulting a protester at the G20 demonstrations in London, the Crown Prosecution Service has said.

Demonstrators posted YouTube footage of a police officer appearing to strike Brighton woman Nicola Fisher.

Ms Fisher, 35, was one of two women to complain about the conduct in April of Sergeant Delroy (Tony) Smellie.

In a statement, a CPS spokesman said: "The Crown Prosecution Service has decided that there is sufficient evidence to charge Police Sergeant Delroy (Tony) Smellie with the offence of assault by beating of Nicola Fisher on 2nd April 2009 at a demonstration in the City of London."

Just in case you think the world has gone mad, Sergeant Smellie is black.

SUPREME COURT: After Dalek Supreme in the last issue, we can now present the Supreme Court. The highest court in the United Kingdom has been formally opened on 1st October, with the swearing in of its 11 justices in a ceremony in London.

The Supreme Court, housed at Middlesex Guildhall, replaces the Law Lords as the last court of appeal in all matters other than criminal cases in Scotland.

The £59m Supreme Court has opened six years after it was first announced. Its first members were, until last month, the Law Lords who would have otherwise heard the same cases in the House of Lords. Bargain.

TROPICAL STORM: Although much attention has been given to the devastation of Typhoon Parma, the little known Tropical Storm Grace gives a warning of what is to come in a warming world.

Grace formed on the 5th October in the Bay of Biscay and moved north. As we write, it is predicted to dissipate in the next couple of days but such a northerly storm is in itself a frightening sign of global warming.

CASUALTIES: Autumn normally brings a reduction in fighting in Afghanistan as the weather becomes worse. Still Coalition deaths were 70 in September, compared to 37 in September 2008.

By the 5th October the invaders – sorry, reconstruction workers – had lost 20 more dead, which was more than in all of October last year.

BAD JUDGEMENT: The trial of a former US judge accused of having sex with male inmates in exchange for leniency has started in Mobile, Alabama.

Herman Thomas, 48, denies the charges, which include sodomy, kidnapping, extortion, sex abuse and assault.

Up to 15 current and former prisoners are set to testify against him at the jury trial.

LENS CAP OUR FEATHERED FRIEND



Just to reassure readers, *Freedom* does not intend to go down the *Class War* route of 'hospitalised copper', but we couldn't resist this one. A giant pet parrot attacked a policeman after its owner was pulled over for driving with the bird on her shoulder. The driver was arrested after the officer discovered she was banned from driving – but then had to drive her car to the pound with the pet parrot flying loose inside the car. The macaw, which was furious at being parted from its owner, launched wave after wave of attacks on the officer – leaving him with bite and scratch marks to his hands and arms.

Tories versus the unemployed

Tory leader David Cameron won roaring approval from the party faithful at the Conservative Party conference in Manchester last week by threatening to slash incapacity benefit if they took power at the next election. In an attempt to save £600 million to pay for a new 'back to work' scheme the Tories have promised to bully the sick off benefits under the proposed "big, bold and radical" shake-up of the welfare system.

Cameron, a privileged Old Etonian with a personal fortune of over £30m, declared unemployment the centrepiece of the conference and at its heart a massive scheme to "get Britain working" paid for by cutting benefits and punishing the poorest and economically most vulnerable in society.

As part of the package that would see millions blackmailed into accepting unpaid and degrading work or have their benefits stopped if they refused, Cameron promised his rich backers to effectively extend New Labour's Welfare Reform Act, which replaced guaranteed financial support with the conditional means tested Employment and Support Allowance with the aim of cutting the number of incapacity benefit claimants by 20,000 each year.

The initial start-up cost of the scheme would be £600m, which the Tories say will be met by transferring more people from incapacity benefits to jobseeker's allowance, cutting their benefit by as much as £20 a week, or getting people off incapacity benefit

completely by making it harder to prove they are unable to work.

The idea is for private training firms to be drafted in to prepare the unemployed for work and take over assessing the 2.6 million people on incapacity benefit to see what work they might be able to do, essentially farming out more of the welfare service to the private sector.

One of the current government's biggest private welfare operators, A4e, assisted just 19,572 people into work, globally, last year but have an annual turn over of £146m paid for largely through the public purse. Cameron made it clear that the private sector would play a more "aggressive" role in his future welfare plans.

On the very same day New Labour cut benefit support for asylum seekers to just £5 a day. The change means the weekly rate for a single asylum seeker over 25 who is destitute and asks for support will be reduced from £42.16 to £35.13 a week.

Shadow schools and families secretary Michael Gove reinforced the Tories hard-line approach to unemployment commenting: "The Conservative Party is a party on a mission, on a crusade, to deal with deep-seated social, structural problems... You can characterise that mission, that desire, to ensure social mobility is spread more widely and to deal with entrenched poverty however you wish." Many welfare activists see it as a return to Thatcher's ruthless conservatism of the 1980s.



Chiapas: another campaign success

Report of the ongoing struggles in Mexico

Last week, the Tseltal population of San Sebastian Bachajon, municipality of Chilon, Chiapas, peacefully regained control of the booth collecting payments from visitors to the waterfalls at Agua Azul. In doing this, they were exercising their legitimate right to protect and manage the natural resources in their territory. The response of the government, headed by Juan Sabines, has been to intimidate and threaten the community by despatching about 250 police to the area.

The indigenous inhabitants of Bachajon are adherents to the Other Campaign which was called by the EZLN, and are also part of the resistance to the mega resorts which are being imposed by the government of Chiapas on communities in the region. As a

result, they have been repressed and imprisoned on several occasions, without giving up their struggle.

The Fr. San Bartolomé de las Casas Human Rights Centre, which has been accompanying the community and denouncing the ongoing harassment against them, documented the threatening presence of about 250 state troops, some at the turning for Agua Azul and some at the village of Xhanil, in five Torton type trucks and 12 patrol cars, together with agents of the Ministerial Police.

The human rights centre says that the reclamation of the booth was decided in a consultation process in assemblies in the three centres of the community: Ch'ich, Centro Alan Sacjun and Centro Bachajon. With this action Tseltal residents asserted their rights over the use of their natural resources, which are recognised by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 169, which the Mexican government has pledged to respect.

But the Chiapas government cares little for international conventions which do not involve foreign investment and the plundering of natural resources. There are innumerable examples to prove this: in this same community, on 17th April, the payment booth was dismantled through an operation involving state and federal police, violating the territorial rights of the indigenous people, and attacking the personal integrity of the brothers Antonio and Jerome Gomez Saragosa through torture and arbitrary imprisonment.

Now, before the possible eviction of the community and due to the pressure and clear acts of harassment committed, a protest letter is circulating on the Internet which demands respect for the rights of the Tseltal people of San Sebastian Bachajon, removal of the police and the release of Geronimo and Antonio Gomez Saragosa.

Gloria Muñoz Ramírez

also published in *La Jornada*, 3rd October 2009

Secret policing exposed

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full top-to-toe images of the front, back and each side of each individual in the group, along with a clear close up shot of the face.

The group had been targeted because they were a group of 'young males'. The FIT were fishing – they had no cause for suspicion or any existing intelligence on the group. They said that the photos were to try and identify them as part of the crowd that had been involved in disorder at previous Gaza protests. More than likely the images will also be entered onto the Met police's Public Order branch (CO11) database as a reference for future demos, as FIT continue to build up a picture of who is who, and who does what.

CO11 had previously – repeatedly – denied suggestions that they ran their own image database, although they had admitted to entering reports on known activists onto the Met's criminal intelligence CrimInt database. But taking the stand, Supt Hartshorn, head of operations at CO11, accepted that there

was a specific public order system. There is a 'stand-alone' image database, run by CO11, at New Scotland Yard, he said.

Getting an entry on this database is astoundingly easy. There is no need to have a criminal record – mere association with anarchists will do the trick.

For those with a criminal record, the database will contain a custody photograph. This will be updated if you are seen again on demonstrations and have changed your appearance – a new hairdo maybe. Unlike PNC (Police National Computer) records, CO11 will try to have a current photo for all its active targets.

For those who have never been arrested, CO11 can justify your inclusion on the database with what Hartshorn called "two strands of intelligence". This is not hard to get. One example of a 'strand of intelligence' would be a 'more than passing contact' with known activists. Another would be a subjective assessment by FIT of your 'behaviour' on a

demonstration. FIT would no doubt revert to their old tricks of stop and search in order to complete their record with a name and address.

The aim of all this is not just to intimidate, it is also to isolate and control. The point of being aware of FIT tactics is not to be intimidated and paranoid, but to be able to avoid or resist their surveillance capabilities. With the increasing surveillance capabilities presented by new technology, resisting the FIT can no longer be seen as an 'optional extra' to political activism.

FITwatch take a direct action approach to resisting FIT, restricting their ability to operate, but also collecting and compiling intelligence on them.

If you have had any dealings with FIT officers, and have statements or complaints relating to them, or if you would be willing to make data protection access requests for the data they hold on you e-mail FITwatch at defycops@yahoo.co.uk

ANALYSIS

The struggle is one and the same

Is the return of workplace militancy a cue for anarchists to engage more fruitfully with the working class?

Freedom takes a look at the most recent and ongoing industrial disputes and wonders whether, with the New Labour government on the point of collapse, the recession still very much in evidence and the global economic climate dulling the most hardened of neo-liberal hearts, the stage is set for the workplace to become once again the battleground for open social and political conflict, and what role, if any, should anarchists play in this?

A set of stages

The year so far has brought with it its own determinate features of social conflict and political expression. Along with the threatened appearance of the state sponsored 'summer of rage', the activist mobilisations of Climate Camp and the G20 summit protest, the factory occupations, the countrywide school and swimming pool occupations and sundry anarchist group activities, there continues to be in the background the rumblings of workplace resistance in the form of strikes and walk-outs, not all engineered by the big unions to reinforce their bargaining positions but a genuine, if tempered, re-emergence of a class finding its voice.

Strike action update

A perfect example of the quietly growing militancy and anger of workers is the much under reported bin men's strike in Leeds which, as *Freedom* goes to press, is entering its fifth week.

The strike by 600 refuse collection, street cleaning and waste management workers employed by Leeds council began on 7th September after council leaders decided to cut wages by up to £6,000 a year as part of 'equality' re-grading scheme. Under the single status agreement, councils have taken to downgrading male workers pay rather than upgrade female workers. The strike remains solid with strikers refusing to be intimidated by the actions of council leaders; hiring in private contractors and scab labour (along with police escorts) to shift the backlog and employing a negative PR campaign against its own workers. What makes this interesting though is the attitude and activity outside of formal negotiations.

Already a degree of autonomy is being expressed. Supporters have dumped bin bags full of rubbish outside the house of council leader Richard Brett who, according to strike officials, is "acting like the biggest Thatcherite in West Yorkshire since Eric Pickles". Showbiz actor Keith Allen has



Lindsey oil workers protesting on 19th June 2009

offered to perform with his band at a benefit to raise money for the strike fund. The dispute has taken on a socialised aspect, perhaps understandable given that rubbish collection affects every person in the city, and it's this socialised aspect that gives us our potential.

The knock-on effect is that refuse collectors in other Yorkshire cities are planning to walk out over the same threats to their pay. Bradford bin workers are facing exactly the same situation and over in Sheffield workers at the already privatised refuse collection service are threatening a walk out after it was discovered the contractor Veolia employs workers on different rates of pay for carrying out the same duties.

Do anarchists exist in the class struggle?

It is these small and seemingly innocuous disputes that form the backbone of a growing discontent and awareness amongst workers. This can sometimes present itself in reactionary terms, as with the Lindsey oil refinery walk-outs, but that shouldn't deflect from the real anger being expressed, or downplay the significance of openly confronting both bosses and the state after years and years of punishing workplace compliance. But as the Vestas occupation only too clearly highlighted anarchists still play a low-key, to the point of non-existent, part in any form of solidarity or practical support. And during the last London tube workers strike, the RMT were desperate for outside support, so much so they specifically invited Climate

Camp to get involved directly as part of the support group. Anarchists, class struggle or otherwise, were conspicuous in the lack of acknowledgement or visible presence.

Wearing badges is not enough

The question is then what, if anything, can anarchists do to engage with ongoing workplace struggles that go beyond mimicking the ambulance chasing antics of the workerist left?

A visible practical support for militant workplace activity, especially that which also challenges dominant union bureaucracy, can only be productive as a collective endeavour. At the recent Anarchist Conference there was a lot of discussion and open declarations in support of 'the class struggle' but ultimately argued as a political position that should be adopted (!) rather than a desire to implement any concrete engagement relating to supporting workplace activity.

For the past tens years class struggle anarchists have disassociated themselves from the anarchist movement, content to take up the position of critical outsider; taking pot shots at the failings of the anarchist movement at a time of very low level of class struggle. This position cannot sustain itself if class conflict is set to enter a more volatile and defined period, especially if an old Etonian Tory party forms the next government. Class struggle anarchists can no longer just complain about the antics of other anarchist positions – they must put their politics into practice.

IN BRIEF

HIT AND RUN: Labour's deputy leader Harriet Harman has said she is co-operating with police over allegations that she left the scene of a minor car accident.

The Mail on Sunday says a witness has accused her of not giving her details after the crash in south London.

A spokesman for Ms Harman said she strongly denied the allegations. No injuries have been reported.

The Metropolitan Police have confirmed that they are investigating a minor traffic collision in Dulwich on 3rd July.

The collision is said to have involved Ms Harman's vehicle and a parked car.

PLATES: Two 'offensive' number plates have been withdrawn from an auction in Worcestershire.

The plates F4 GOT and D1 KES, which bear resemblance to the derogatory terms faggot and dykes, were due to go under the hammer in Broadway.

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) removed the plates on grounds of "the clear potential offence".

The gay rights group Stonewall said such action by public authorities helped to make Britain "more equal".

A spokesman said: "We welcome the action by the DVLA in ensuring that these potentially offensive items were withdrawn from sale."

The plates were due to be among 1,600 plates to be auctioned later this week. Each of the private plates had a reserve price of £900.

A spokesman for the DVLA said that the "DVLA has responsibility to ensure that the combinations used on registration marks do not cause general upset or offence."

ACID SEAS: Carbon-dioxide emissions are turning the waters of the Arctic Ocean into acid at an unprecedented rate, scientists have discovered.

Research carried out in the archipelago of Svalbard has shown that in many regions around the North Pole the seawater is likely to reach corrosive levels within 10 years. The water will then start to dissolve the shells of mussels and other shellfish and cause major disruption to the food chain. By the end of the century, the entire Arctic Ocean will be corrosively acidic.

"This is extremely worrying," Professor Jean-Pierre Gattuso, of France's Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, told an international oceanography conference last week.

"We knew that the seas were getting more acidic and this would disrupt the ability of shellfish, like mussels, to grow their shells. But now we realise the situation is much worse. The water will become so acidic it will actually dissolve the shells of living shellfish."

Local News from WAG

Cable Street

Whitechapel Anarchist Group (WAG) and friends held a commemorative walk and get together on Sunday 4th October to celebrate the 73rd anniversary of the famous Battle of Cable Street (pictured below).

On this historical day, tens of thousands of Eastenders rallied in the streets of Whitechapel to prevent Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF) staging a provocative march through the Jewish East End. The subsequent events have since become part of East End and working class history, reaching almost mythical proportions. But apart from a handful of familiar photographs, brief descriptions in historical books and memoirs, what really happened that afternoon?

A walk, hosted by Martin Lux, author of *Anti-Fascist*, assembled at Tower Hill tube station, at 1pm on Sunday 4th October. The events were retraced, starting in Royal Mint Street, where the BUF, under massive police protection, stood in massed ranks ready to march. The walk then crossed over into Cable Street itself, the scene of the barricades and confrontation with the police, terminating at the furious mural depicting the event.

These events were vividly reconstructed by Mr Lux, a long-term resident of the area who, over the last 40 years, has met many veterans of the events. The talk ranged across subjects such as the role of women, the 'lumpen', and the aftermath of the battle.

The walk ended with an informal get together in one of the area's favoured watering holes. "They Shall Not Pass!"

English Defence League

The struggle continues. On Friday 11th September, WAG supporters travelled across London to Harrow, to demonstrate solidarity with the local community who were resisting an attempt by a new right-wing grouping, the English Defence League (EDL), to provoke inter-racial strife by holding a so-called 'anti-Sharia law' march and rally.

While being no supporters of any form of law, we recognised this as a blatant provocation echoing the National Front marches of the 1970s and the BUF marches of the 1930s.

Far from being regarded as unwelcome outsiders, we were amicably greeted, our gesture of solidarity appreciated for what it was. Of course, the police had different ideas, subjecting us to two stop-and-search routines.

As the afternoon panned out, it was obvious this was a genuine defensive by the local community, not just Muslims – predominantly youth, girls included. There were several minor clashes with riot cops throughout the day.

Faced by overwhelming odds, the EDL failed to put in much of an appearance, apart from a handful of skulking morons protected by scores of police.

Not exactly an earth-shattering event but, with the rise of the BNP, a scenario that will occur on a larger scale, with greater frequency and intensity over the next few years.



INTERNATIONAL

IN BRIEF

GREECE: Three of the four people accused of involvement in the urban guerrilla group Nuclei of Fire Conspiracy have been remanded in custody pending trial after the state investigator applied an anti-terrorist law to them which permits imprisonment "in expectation of evidence".

The three boys are accused of membership of a group "jeopardising the democracy and political system of the Republic" and for participation in three bombings of apartments housing, a) the now chief of the secret services, b) the ex-chief of the general staff and ex-minister of public order, and c) the ex-minister of education and his wife, the shadow minister of economics for PaSoK.

GREECE: Noted Italian anarchist Alfredo Bonanno has been arrested following a failed robbery at a bank in Trikala city.

The 73-year-old, who was acting as getaway driver, and a 46-year old Greek man were stopped at a road block 20 minutes after taking 46,000 euros in the raid.

Bonanno is widely regarded as a major figure in modern insurrectionary anarchism and was previously jailed by the Italian state for writing essays such as *Armed Joy* and *The Anarchist Tension*.

FRANCE: Workers have spontaneously gone on strike out in solidarity with a colleague who committed suicide. There were a series of walkouts across the country on 1st October as workers showed solidarity and protested against the work pressures that lead to his death. In Annecy-le-Vieux, where the dead man worked, over 100 of his colleagues downed tools and held a demonstration. In Bordeaux 200-300 workers took to the streets. There was also a demonstration at the regional headquarters in Lyon by over 600 workers. Workers are angry at unattainable targets, changes to working conditions and forced relocations. Since privatisation 11 years ago the company has reduced its staff by 40,000 to 100,000.

US: Jeffrey 'Free' Luers was released from prison on 2nd October after serving nine-and-a-half years, reduced from his original 23-year sentence. A Lane County Circuit Court Judge signed a supplemental judgment granting Jeff an additional 30% reduction in his total incarceration time, releasing him three months earlier than expected!

Jeff was originally sentenced to ten years in prison for eco-terrorism after he set fire to three SUV cars in 2000.

ZIMBABWE: Riot police and state security agents have forced striking workers in the southwestern mining town of Zvishavane to return to work, while seven others linked to the opposition MDC party have been summarily dismissed, labour leaders said.

Workers were told that if they did not return to work the following day they should vacate not only the mine houses they were occupying but also get out of town.

LENS CAP ARGENTINA



Garment workers in Argentina march in solidarity against some 2,000 lay-offs by lingerie company Triumph of workers in Thailand. On 24th September, around 100 workers from shoe factories including Puma, Adidas and Soho, and MTE (street recyclers) marched to the Thai Embassy to hand in a letter expressing the solidarity of garment and other workers in Argentina for the garment workers of Triumph. The letter demanded that the government withdraw arrest warrants against union leaders Jitra and others and called on the company to stop union-busting and also for the restoration of jobs.

Nazis attack folk singer with acid

Sofia Papazoglou, a popular folk singer, was attacked by members of the Golden Dawn neo-nazi party in Athens after throwing election leaflets handed to her in the garbage. The singer remains hospitalised with serious burns from use of unidentified acid spray and with impaired vision.

Sofia, a popular folk singer of the 'entehno' genre known for her progressive politics, was attacked on 1st October outside Katehaki metro station in Athens by ten nazis when she threw away election leaflets handed to her by the thugs in the garbage.

The police did not intervene and the singer was taken to hospital after metro workers intervened. Half an hour later the neo-nazis were dispersed by anarchists who arrived after hearing the news of the vicious attack.

Golden Dawn was created in the 1980s by convicted neo-nazi bomber Mihaloliakos, on the orders of the imprisoned head of the military junta of 1967-1974, Colonel Georgios Papadopoulos. Since then the group has waged a campaign of terror against the left wing and anarchists as well as immigrants, people of colour and Jews. Nevertheless, as it comes under the explicit protection of EYP, the greek secret services (daily newspaper *Eleftherotypia* has published a pay-sheet of Mihaloliakos by EYP), the neo-nazi group has never been persecuted and is allowed to participate in national elections.

Golden Dawn denies involvement in the incident, calling it "rumours spread by dirty Jews and freemasons".

Edited from an article at libcom.org

Notes from the United States

In late September in South Carolina, the insurance company Fortis was ordered to pay US\$10 million (£6.1m) in damages to a patient, Jerome Mitchell.

Mitchell obtained coverage from Fortis in 2001, when he was 17 years old. But tested HIV positive a year later and lost his coverage. In a court ruling upholding an earlier judgment, the South Carolina Supreme Court said Fortis' actions were reprehensible, "demonstrating an indifference to Mitchell's life and a reckless disregard to his health and safety."

The Health and Human Services Department

launched an investigation in September into the conduct of another major insurance company, Humana; it's one of the largest private carriers serving senior citizens under a program called Medicare Advantage. The company allegedly tried to frighten senior citizens with a mailing which falsely warned them they could lose important benefits under healthcare legislation in Congress.

The Federal Communications Commission meanwhile has finally proposed 'Net Neutrality' rules which will prevent internet service

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Police 'complicit' in Durban attacks

ANC mob murders four in attack on housing activists as police look on

Fears are growing that thugs backed by South Africa's ruling ANC political party could use police protection to annihilate one of the country's most powerful progressive movements after recent murders.

The grassroots shack dwellers' movement Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM) in Durban, South Africa, has called for solidarity after a mob led by local ANC chairman Jackson Gumede murdered four, beat dozens and burned the homes of leading activists.

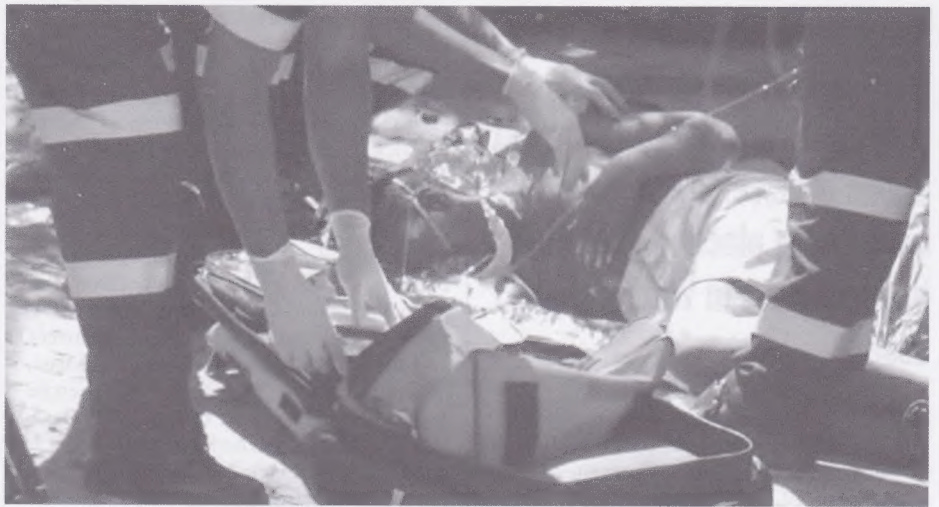
The armed gang attacked at the AbM stronghold of Kennedy Road in the city, chanting ethnic slogans as they went. Residents eventually beat them off, killing two.

Police initially refused to intervene in the fighting, before arresting eight AbM leaders on murder charges – most were not even in the area at the time. In subsequent interviews, it is claimed by witnesses at the scene that only the attacking AbM fighters were spoken to.

ANC politicians and the police were present while the houses were destroyed.

The ANC have blamed AbM members for the violence, saying that the intervention was designed to 'liberate' Kennedy Road from a curfew imposed by the Kennedy Road Development Committee (KRDC).

However locals have pointed out that the curfew in question was imposed by local mandate and only applied to the opening times of shebeens (local bars), which were required



A victim is attended by paramedics the morning after the attack on Kennedy Road

to close at 10pm to minimise noise and violence – alcoholism is a serious problem in the area.

AbM figure S'bu Zikode saw his home destroyed and had to flee the settlement. He said: "This is not just an attack on the KRDC. It is not just an attack on AbM. It is an attack on our politics. This attack is an attempt to suppress the voice that has emerged from the dark corners of our country. That voice is the voice of ordinary poor people. This attack is an attempt to terrorise that voice back into the dark corners."

"Yakoob Baig [ANC municipal council member] says that 'harmony' has been restored. For the ANC harmony means their power and our silence. For us our silence means evictions, shack fires, children dying of diarrhoea and the organised contempt that

we face day after day. Therefore we have to speak. We have to break the 'harmony' that is our silence in the face of our oppression."

The settlement is now controlled by an armed pro-ANC group who have the full backing of the police and the party. Abahlali are banned from the settlement, which they were elected to lead, on the pain of death. At least a thousand people have fled and many are sleeping rough.

The response from AbM has been mixed, with some calls for political pressure to make the state remove the ANC fighters, while others have suggested the creation of community militias, on the grounds the state cannot be trusted.

For more see abahlali.org

Notes from the Unites States

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providers (ISPs) from blocking or withholding any online services in any fashion.

In particular the rules will stop the big ISPs like AT&T, Verizon and Comcast from slowing or blocking the delivery over the internet of such services or content as TV shows. The implication is that access to content (such as anarchist websites) is similarly assured.

Iraq

Obama vowed to withdraw all combat forces from Iraq before September 2011. Yet he plans to leave up to 50,000 troops there in 'training and advisory' roles. At present there are nearly 130,000 soldiers in Iraq and over 50,000 in the occupation of Afghanistan, up to an additional 18,000 were approved for deployment this year and there are increasing calls for that number to double.

Nevertheless, the resistance movement is as strong as ever.

Independent journalist Dahr Jamail's new book, *The Will to Resist: Soldiers who refuse*

to fight in Iraq and Afghanistan, describes soldiers' opposition to war.

Jamail comments, "The soldiers I spoke with while working on this book are some of the most ardent anti-war activists I have ever met". The book has stories of soldiers who refuse missions, go AWOL, flee outside the US, and Iraq, refuse to carry loaded weapons, arrange to be shot in the leg and commit suicide.

To refuse orders is pretty widespread, apparently. Equally encouraging are the cases of soldiers who stand up to systemic misogyny and homophobia in the military, from where there has been a steady stream of incidents of institutionalised 'command rape', harassment, abuse and assault.

Although the group, Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network, estimates that one in six women in the United States will receive some sort of sexual assault in her lifetime, in the military, at least two in five will.

Louis Further

South African anarchists urge self-defence force

In a communiqué following the Kennedy Road attack (see above), the Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front noted that what is now unquestionable is the fact that the attacks were pre-planned.

"Although popular self-defence of the residents would be preferable, we understand that this is not viable when their attackers are supported by the police, while the KRDC is unarmed and lacks training in self-defence. We therefore understand why they would call for immediate state intervention to prevent any further attacks, but would like to raise a word of caution for our comrades in Kennedy Road settlement to consider. By calling for police or military intervention, the KRDC is talking about inviting the forces of repression into the heartland of a working class social movement that is hated by the class enemy. In the slightly longer term, any military or police presence would be a severe obstacle to further resistance."

FEATURE

Massive anti-demonstrator exercise

More than 300 police officers from ten different forces were recently involved in the largest public order exercise ever to have taken place at the MDP's headquarters in Wethersfield, Essex.

Ten different Police Forces were involved in a public order exercise hosted by the Ministry of Defence Police. It was the first time that the Ministry of Defence Police (MDP) had been asked to host the exercise which is held annually by the members of the Eastern Region Public Order Working Group which consists of Essex, Hertfordshire, Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire and the MDP.

For the last four years the training event has been held at RAF Alconbury and hosted by Cambridgeshire Constabulary. But the headquarters of the MDP, with its ample space and married quarters providing a ready-made and realistic backdrop, proved to be the perfect choice for Exercise Iceni 5.

Chief Inspector Chris Yates, of the Operational Support Unit (South), said "Each year a planning team with representatives from each force identifies and agrees a topical theme for the exercise and venue for the exercise to take place.

"This year the theme was based around climate change and the associated protest activity. The fundamental objectives of the event were to test and evaluate the interoperability of common public order

tactics between forces and to test the resilience of the command structure and of individual commanders."

Every participating force from the Eastern Region supplied one Police Support Unit (PSU), each consisting of 29 officers. In addition to these officers, Northamptonshire Police, Nottinghamshire Police and the City of London Police Horse Unit also took part.

The role of the 150 protesters for the event was taken by MDP recruits from the Agency Training College, staff at the MOD Police and Guarding Agency Headquarters, and further education students from Essex.

Chief Inspector Yates said: "The exercise was structured to move through various stages of tension in the 'community' to a full scale riot which included the throwing of missiles and petrol bombs. This latter element was controlled and orchestrated by trained police staff.

"The whole scenario was played out over almost five hours and had two distinct phases, with the nominated command teams rotating through each phase. Each command team was also expected to interact with the media as they would do in a real-time situation."

The exercise began with a protest march involving around 100 protesters who had congregated at a 'bus station' – in reality the hard-standing next to the main HQ stores building. The group then marched up the road and headed down to the base exit gate by the Agency Training College. This gate represented an entranceway to 'Wethersfield Airport' and protesters massed here before some staged a sit-in across the road, using locking devices to chain themselves together and help create an obstruction.

At the same time, a tripod was erected at another crossroads to further complicate matters.



Ten different police forces were involved in the 'protesters'; below right, petrol bombs are thrown

Whilst officers were dealing with these issues, reports were then received of an incursion from outside Wethersfield Airport onto the airfield after protesters 'cut their way through' the fence line. Protesters again 'locked on' once they were on the airfield whilst others attempted to evade capture when police arrived.

A further contingent of 30 to 40 protesters was also outside the fence line when officers arrived and attempted to breach the police cordon when it was established.

At the same time that these issues were developing, intelligence was also received that some ringleaders were intending to cause more serious disorder and had a stockpile of petrol bombs at an address in Cannon Circle. A specialist team then had to execute a search warrant at the house, which involved forcing entry and then arresting several individuals.

Word of this raid and the arrests of the protest leaders then filtered through to protesters, causing public disorder to escalate. Offenders intent on causing trouble then infiltrated two areas of the airfield and used petrol bombs against the PSUs.

To further complicate issues, the entire exercise was followed by a team of journalists, camera operators and photographers who were briefed to get in



Exercise



Exercise 5 public order exercise; below left, the City of London horse unit gets to grips with demonstrators during the 'riot'.

amongst the action and approach both sides for interviews. Individual officers and Bronze Commanders were faced with well-equipped camera crews and radio journalists, asking for their reactions or comments as they were dealing with the unfolding scenario – increasing the pressure on them. The media were able to get interviews and reactions from demonstrators, protest leaders and members of the public in order to comment on the police activity in 'real-time' which also added to the level of scrutiny experienced by senior officers during media interviews.

Chief Inspector Yates said: "The exercise was very demanding and certainly put everyone involved through some very tough tests. It was designed to stretch the police response and as such it had to examine the most extreme public order situations that officers could face.

"Although I think it should be pointed out that the exercise theme was used to give direction and narrative and in no way suggests that all the scenarios tested are going to occur at any real-life protest connected to this issue."

A full debrief on Exercise Iceni 5 has yet to be carried out, but Chief Inspector Yates said that initial feedback had been very positive and some important learning points were already emerging:

"We had two Assistant Chief Constables from Northumbria and Essex at the exercise and they have both said that it was very good and considerably better than most, if not all, they have been to."

"The enhanced media element certainly went well with reporters and camera operators saying that they were treated fairly, courteously and professionally and that there was a general feeling that officers recognised that the media had a job to do."



MEANWHILE, BEHIND BARS

Prison activists successfully force government to release privileged information

The Campaign Against Prison Slavery (CAPS), which was formed in 2002 by ex-prisoners, prisoner support groups and activists to campaign against compulsory labour in UK prisons and for the abolition of the Incentives and Earned Privileges Scheme, has just launched their newly expanded website. In addition to a redesign and new Prison News page, the website includes information newly released by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) following a three and a half year struggle by two freelance journalists to get their simple Freedom of Information request answered.

Richard Cookson and Phil Chamberlain, who in the past have written for the *Guardian*, *Independent*, *Times* and *New Statesman*, had originally placed two Freedom of Information requests in January 2006 asking for information on contracts between named prisons, Young Offender Institutions and Immigration Removal Centres in England and Wales and the private companies using prison labour in the prison workshops; specifically the names of the companies, the nature of the work and how much the contracts were worth. The MoJ refused and the two journalists were forced to appeal to the Information Commissioner, who two years later found in their favour. The result was a recent *Guardian* article 'Inside the Sell Blocks' and the new website at prisonlabour.org.uk.

This has been a significant victory for CAPS as it now opens up to scrutiny Contract Services, the body that manages workshops contracting labour to outside private companies, and Prison Service outsiders will finally be able to examine more fully whether the quality of training provided in Contract Services workshops is as poor as prisoners are constantly telling us it is. This is doubly important as the Conservative Party plan to double the number of Contract Service workshop placed in England and Wales if elected next year.

COMMENT

ABOUT FREEDOM

ANGEL ALLEY

The *big* news is that we have installed google checkout on our website so you can now order your Freedom Press titles online. Many thanks to Comrade Klang for this.

We are busy putting in write-ups for various books and authors online and hope to be adding Rebel Press, Phoenix and Attack International titles shortly.

We've been stocking up on new and interesting titles in anticipation and we will also be doing a 'Bookfair Special' edition of the paper for the next issue. Contary to the stated aims of the editors to make *Freedom* a tool of outreach to those interested in anarchism, this issue will be an anarcho-introspective edition. Together with a round-up of the 'movement' (or 'static' as some realists prefer) we will set out the plans and objectives for *Freedom* over the next year.

Many thanks are due to those comrades who have contacted us with views on how the organ should progress, we hope you will not be disappointed with the results.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

To work out if your subscription is due for renewal, look at the number above your name on the address label. This issue is vol 70, no 19, so if your subscription runs out with this issue you'll have 7019 above your name. If the number is 7019 or less, then your subscription is now due for renewal. See page 16 for the current subscription rates and a renewal form or, if you don't want to worry in the future about remembering to renew your subscription to *Freedom*, just ask us to send you a standing order form by emailing subs@freedompress.org.uk or you can write to us at 'Subscriptions', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

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NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 24th October 2009 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 15th October. You can send your articles to us by email to copy@freedompress.org.uk or by post addressed to 'The Editors', Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

It brought a smile to my face at least to see that the first prominent victim of one of this government's most illiberal pieces of legislation should be one of its own members. Even more satisfying was this woman's role in introducing this particular law.

I am referring, of course, to Baroness Scotland, the Attorney General, being caught out employing an illegal immigrant without the correct paperwork.

It is illegal to employ someone without permission to work in the UK under the government's Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act 2006, which the Baroness helped steer through the Lords.

While the government talked all the while of only allowing certain people to work here, the real effect has been to give another weapon to the arsenal of unscrupulous employers like cleaning contractors and Mitie. And to that illustrious company, we can now add Patricia Scotland, currently the chief legal adviser to the government.

She employed Loloahi Tapui, a Tongan who had overstayed on a student visa, as a housekeeper for one of her houses in west London. Her defence was that tax and national insurance had been paid, and that she had seen her passport.

As is typical of New Labour's mean-spirited approach to migrants, any employer must not only check that someone is entitled to work here, but must also keep a copy of the relevant documents that prove this to be the case. Even unknowingly employing someone without the right to work is an offence, making back door racism more likely.

For this the attorney general was fined £5,000 in a civil case, rather than a criminal one, as she was able to prove she hadn't deliberately set out to be stitched up by the *Daily Mail*.

It should be noted that a £5,000 fine is small beer to a wealthy barrister with several homes (and possibly more housekeepers waiting to come out of the woodwork). At the other end of the scale, Indian and Chinese restaurants have complained of being targeted by the Border Agency for raids.

Of course, much of this whole furore is about jobs that pay too little for most locals to do. The places raided are usually cheap-end food processing plants, restaurants or rag-trade sweatshops, all driven to relentlessly cut costs by the bigger outfits at the other end of the supply chain. If they can pay less than minimum wage and get away with it, they will. Why lose your housing benefit to do a crap job that will earn you only a few extra quid and give you a lot of grief?

At least there is some good news. A Jamaican colleague was rueing the fact that a successful black female barrister had let the side down. He listed all of the things she'd achieved, until I countered that she was as bad as all the other politicians who say one thing and do another. It's progress of a sort when the hypocritical politician abusing their power is the Dominican-born daughter of immigrants who would be held up as a success story to the black community otherwise. She may have achieved a lot, but I think most Jamaicans here probably have more in common with her Tongan maid.



Loloahi Tapui (left) was found to be working illegally in the UK as a housekeeper for the Attorney General Baroness Scotland (right)

Is this the way forward?

Tom Cullen (*Freedom*, 12th September) is right to call for anarchists to be open-minded when it comes to supporting pro-working-class candidates at elections. We should, however, be extremely cautious about any new developments in trade union politics that extend into the electoral arena. The RMT union, for instance, was the driving force behind the No2EU project in the recent European elections. It was an essentially reactionary, semi-nationalist platform that did nothing to further working-class unity or raise class consciousness. Had the RMT called for a Green vote it may have helped stop the BNP getting elected in Yorkshire and the north-west. RMT leader Bob Crow also has a dubious political heritage. Although he is currently the left's favourite trade union bureaucrat, he is also a former member of the Stalinist Communist Party of Britain and the Arthur Scargill-worshipping Socialist Labour Party. He also has a bust of Lenin (that great friend of the Russian working-class and peasantry) on his desk in his office.

One of the most interesting organisations to emerge in recent years is the Independent Working Class Association, which has several elected councillors (all on Oxford city council, as far as I know). Although the organisation is confined to a few working-class estates around the country, it provides a possible model for libertarian communists who want to engage in community politics.

MC

Riot city

I also visited Gravesend recently as part of a local police consultative group (see *Freedom*, 29th August). What is painfully obvious is that being trained to deal with petrol-bomb throwing rioters is utterly inappropriate for 99% of all 'public order situations' (defined as a large number of people in one place) in Britain. The trainers are mainly ex-army and may still have the appropriate mentality, i.e. your *modus operandi* is to kill or incapacitate the enemy and look after number one at all costs. They do not have any specific training in how to deal with people's right to demonstrate in a democratic society, and how to balance that right against for instance disruption to traffic, or the circulation of commodities (I mean shopping).

The centre (built under a PFI contract at a cost of £55 million) has a Chief Inspector as its highest ranking on-site officer, but the Superintendent nominally in charge is in London. It is not clear what training is done by 'Bronze' commanders and above at the centre and how the strategic planning impacts on tactical planning. I suspect there is a huge gulf between the two.

All this explains the problem with current public order policing of largely passive demos – they are treated as potentially violent petrol-bomb throwing mobs who will find any opportunity to kill or injure an officer. The obsession with 'risk analysis' and officer safety merely compounds the problem. They

need a whole new training programme. Perhaps the police need to get fluffy to match the hordes of fluffy protesters. But then the media will have nothing to report, and the police will be upset if they can't throw petrol bombs at each other every week at Gravesend. And anarchists will be upset if we can't have images of either violent coppers whacking poor defenceless protesters, or spikey protestors lobbing a brick at a snarling riot cop. In retrospect everyone, I suspect, is secretly happy with the status quo.

Freedom's legal correspondent

Prison labour

The Campaign Against Prison Slavery has been active in organising against forced labour in British prisons for eight years now, without gaining much of a media profile. During that time we have relied largely upon prisoners and prisoners' families to provide us with information on the companies that have contracts with the prison service in England and Wales and in Scotland.

We have been much less successful in our attempts to use the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act. FOI requests to the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) have invariably been turned down, after months of prevarication, under the catchall exemptions of being 'prejudicial to commercial interests' or being too costly to answer. Reference was also often made to serious threats and activities being undertaken by groups actively targeting companies using prison labour. Surely they couldn't mean us?

So in 2006 when we were contacted by two freelance journalists engaged in writing and article about prison labour in the UK and interested in any information we could pass on to them to help them in targeting their FOI requests, we gave them what help we could and wished them well. A couple of months ago and three years later, we finally heard back from one of them, could we supply him with some quotes from prisoners to use in an article. We did and thought nothing more of it.

That is until an article entitled 'Inside the Sell Blocks' appeared in the *Guardian* on

9th September. It, together with two linked articles, one by the same two authors (Richard Cookson and Phil Chamberlain) and the other Eric Allison, the *Guardian's* Prison Correspondent, were on the subject of prison labour and all referenced CAPS. However, rather than the publicity for CAPS, it is the 'Sell Blocks' article and the classic story of government prevarication and mendacity that has benefited us most.

As intimated previously, the MoJ is notorious for taking an eternity to answer FOI requests, all of which should be complied with within 20 days excepting exceptional circumstances, and finding excuses for giving out as little information as possible. And both the applications Cookson and Chamberlain made in January 2006 asking for details of companies using forced labour in prisons in England and Wales received the full treatment. Eventually after eight months of chasing the MoJ up, they made a partial disclosure but most of the information was withheld under Section 43 'commercial interest' exemption.

They requested an internal appeal, which the MoJ only answered nine months later after a complaint to the Information Commissioner forced them to respond. Needless to say they upheld the initial decision. Rich and Phil appealed the decision to the Commissioner in June 2007 and waited. And waited. Eventually, in February 2009, the Commissioner announced that he was starting his investigation.

In June this year he delivered his verdict. The Ministry of Justice were wrong on all counts, including potential breaches of Health & Safety and the Human Rights Act resulting from the 'targeting' of companies by groups such as CAPS, in refusing the requests and must make full disclosure. This has resulted not only in the article but in a new website: prisonlabour.org.uk.

Additionally, the way is now open for FOI requests for information on all the companies currently using Contract Services; to build a wider campaign against the exploitation of prisoners forced to do mind-numbing, low-skill jobs for mere pennies in the prisons of England and Wales

Brighton Anarchist Black Cross

After the Bookfair why not come down to

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Once again Freedom Bookshop will be hosting a post Bookfair social in Angel Alley, 84b Whitechapel High Street, from 7pm until 11pm. Nibbles and various refreshments will be available, together with high quality repartee.

No queue for the loo before 8pm, CND members welcome, bring your dog.

GETTING ACTIVE

PRISON NEWS

A less than model prison

A year-long inquiry by Metropolitan Police and the Prison Service's anti-corruption unit into corruption at Pentonville prison (originally known as The Model Prison) costing several million pounds of taxpayers' money has collapsed.

The Prison Service had hoped that Operation Extract would provide sufficient evidence to bring charges against 14 prison officers who had been suspended on full pay since August 2006 following allegations of accepting bribes to smuggle mobile phones and drugs into the jail.

Two of the screws had already been tried and found guilty of wilful misconduct in a public office, based on evidence of fellow screws, but had their convictions overturned on appeal. Now all 14 are expected to receive between £5,000 and £9,000 compensation from the Prison Service.

Needless to say the Prison Officers Association are taking the opportunity for points scoring arguing that the charges against its members were racially motivated and that it was a total waste of time and money – the outing of the whistleblowers cost hundreds of thousands of pounds in compensation payments.

"This is a big embarrassment for the prison service," crowed Brian Caton, general secretary of the POA and newly revealed convert to the Socialist Party.

Cells of the future

In a wonderful new plan from the Conservatives, police will be given 'mobile urban prison cells' or 'Tesco jails' as they have been nicknamed (if you'll forgive the pun). They will be deployed in 'target areas' and allow the processing and fingerprinting of those arrested, the issuing of on-the-spot fines, bail or court summons, and even allow custody sergeants to charge people via a satellite link without having to take them back to the local nick.

And as a foretaste of what is likely to come after the next election, Bob Croxton, the guy behind the Criminal Information Bureau website, has started the aptly titled CELLS project in partnership with the Liverpool Unite campaign. It features a 8ft by 12ft replica with bricked-up window, bed, iron bars and all, of the cell in HMP Walton that he spent some time in on a nine-year stretch for drug dealing. The cell, and two replica holding rooms, are stuck on the back of an 18-tonne lorry and taken around the schools in Liverpool.

The idea apparently is for "The kids get to experience what it's like being an inmate. It educates young people about the real horrors of prison like gang rape [gang rape in UK prisons is about as rare as a Man U supporter in Liverpool 8], suicide, self-harm, torture and violence. By sharing our own experiences of crime, custody and its consequences, we hope to prevent young people going down the wrong path."



● The second Bristol Anarchist Bookfair on 12th September was successful beyond all expectations. The venue, the Island Club (a former bridewell!) is in central Bristol, which paid off by making the event accessible and attracting lots of new faces. Attendance from significant numbers of people not already a part of the anarchist/activist 'scene' was especially encouraging – some of them open-minded and curious passers-by. Hopefully they will have learned something, enjoyed themselves and been impressed by the organised anarchy in action that they found there.

Within the broad theme of Recession and Resistance there was a wide range of workshops, with themes as diverse as anarchist parenting, workplace struggles, radical history, anti-militarism, rethinking education and debt cancellation. Bristol Indymedia coordinated a day of radical film screenings and Kafe Kebele provided fantastic vegan food. The evening afterparty featured Gary Clail, The Bus Stations Loonies and the Suit Burners.

One attendee captured the welcoming buzz apparent on the day commenting: "It was big enough to be big while still being small enough to be small". We think we know what he meant. It is thought that as many as 700 attended. This is twice the number at the first Bristol Anarchist Bookfair in St Werburghs last year, also considered to be a success. We estimate that if attendance continues to increase at this rate of 100% annually, everyone in Bristol will be attending within a decade.

Bristol Co-Mutiny group also organised an ambitious week of direct action during the week following the Bookfair. See <http://comutiny.wordpress.com/> for more on the Bristol CoMutiny group.

For full details of the 2008 and 2009 Bristol bookfairs are available from bristolanarchistbookfair.org/

Bristol Anarchist Bookfair Collective

● The East End of London is bracing itself for a massive influx of anarchists on Saturday 24th October for the annual **London Anarchist Bookfair**. The largest and longest running radical bookfair in the UK, an institution in itself attracting people in their thousands, it is most important date in any anarchists calendar giving radicals from across the UK and abroad the opportunity to come together, meet each other, share information and literature, to discuss their experiences and ideas and putting those ideas into action.

The London Anarchist Bookfair will be at Queen Mary & Westfield College, Mile End Road, London E1 4NS, starting at 10am.

A full list of events, meetings and stalls can be found at anarchistbookfair.org/whatson.html

● After making an impressive appearance at this year's Climate Camp, Cambridge anarchists are busy making mischief in their community with the establishment of **Cambridge Unemployed Workers Union (UWU)** to fight for improved welfare conditions. Cambridge UWU is dedicated to fighting for better welfare benefits, respect in the Job Centre and the scrapping of the government's National Welfare Reform Bill and 'Workfare' schemes.

If you live in the area and want to get involved, call 07532 456 799 or you can email them at camps_unemployed@worker.com

● Yorkshire comrades involved in Leeds in Crisis are holding an event in the city centre entitled **Leeds Turned Upside Down** on Saturday 10th October. Described as a journey through time and space exploring the radical past of Leeds and re-imagining our possible futures.

People are asked to meet 1.30pm at The Dragon Hotel, Whitehall Road, Leeds LS12 4TJ. You are encouraged to bring you walking shoes and thinking hats.

Economic commentary

John Griffin looks at 'retail' and 'investment' banking with a view to libertarian alternatives in the third part of his look at the financial crisis

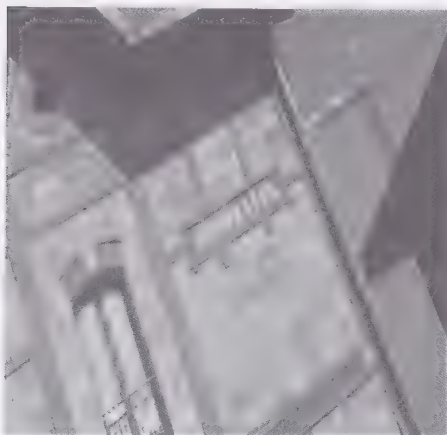
Clearly both arms of the banking trade have over-reached themselves in recent years: Retail banks leant far too much in mortgages and personal loans, whilst investment banks borrowed from each other to boost their purchases of commercial property, commodities, like oil, food and metal ores, along with trading on the stock market and in foreign exchange.

Snake oil

Investment bankers, also became interested in more dubious 'financial products' known as 'derivatives'. These are investments whose value is tied to some artificial concept like a stock index, but do not entail ownership of the actual stocks, whilst still being tradeable. Those interested will find lots to read on Credit Default Swaps (CDS), etc., on the Wikipedia, further discussion here is inappropriate.

In the US ('sub-prime') mortgages, issued to borrowers more likely to default, were 'bundled' with safer investments, and thus 'securitised', were sold on as 'Collateralised Debt Obligations' (CDO). During the boom years, UK banks foolishly bought into this market and are now desperate to off-load their CDOs along with other "toxic assets", but I am getting ahead of myself.

Financiers thought that in CDS and CDO they had discovered new forms of snake oil which could ameliorate risk, and managed to convince State Regulators on both sides of the Atlantic that regulations could be dismantled. Then they all thought it would be safe to increase 'leveraging', i.e. purchase more stocks with more borrowed money.



Miners leaving the worked-out mine on their last day at Tower Colliery in Wales

Compared with retail banking, investment banking is open to far more risk, and so following the 1929 crash, the Americans passed the Glass – Steagall Act to force the banks to keep them separate. Clinton repealed Glass – Steagall, and de-regulation, begun with Thatcher and Major, was continued with Blair and Brown here in the UK.

So, having placed our hard cash in some bank deposit account bearing little interest, there is nothing to stop the bank using it for a flutter on derivatives. And if it all goes belly-up they want us again, as taxpayers, to bail them out! A disastrous state of affairs, but what about our alternative?

Pragmatic anarchism

There is a distinct lack of anarchist publications in economics, indeed *Freedom* currently has a book on its shelves which denies its relevance. We are apt to take up ideologically 'pure' positions which avoid dealing with social realities, preferring the philosophical to the sociological and the economic – or so it appears to me. I am a pragmatist: as long as there is no hierarchy, and it works, then it's okay with me.

I foresee a possible future of human-sized cooperatives within a market context. Getting back to banking, it follows that such a society would need the equivalent of contemporary retail banks. These would operate on the basis of deposits, and interest charged at rates sufficient to cover running costs. Such a bank would resemble a large credit union, or a very necessary and much valued social service. Most of investment banking, the stock market and the rest of the capitalist merry-go-round, could be dumped, leaving a market made responsive

to egalitarian principles and based on sound money.

We currently have relatively few co-ops here in the UK, but they are much more numerous elsewhere in Europe, and it is likely that more will appear as the industrial recession deepens. By way of illustration, older readers may recall the success of Tower Colliery, condemned as 'uneconomic', and closed during the 1980s recession and pit closure programme. The Welsh miners bought the pit from the National Coal Board using pooled redundancy money and continued to operate the pit until about three years ago when it became worked out. The capital accumulated was then re-invested in other community ventures.

The achievements of Tower Colliery are impressive, but they are small beer compared with the Mondragon group of co-ops in Spain. Mondragon has its own co-operative bank, along with integrated educational and welfare facilities. Almost an alternative society, Mondragon offers invaluable social and economic data which illustrate what can, and is being done, right now.

It is important to stress that Tower and Mondragon use shared ownership, but with some degree of hierarchy in the form of an elected management. Some would regard this as workers' participation rather than direct workers control, but the latter is always difficult to perfect in large organisations, and is dependent on the depth of commitment in the workforce. The purists can sneer, but more Mondragons must be a whole lot better than the current shambles. In economics, as in everything else, I prefer to proceed from what I know is workable; anarchist utopias may, or may not, follow.

REVIEWS

WHAT'S ON

OCTOBER

12th Agrofuels Don't Roc(k), demonstration against government 'renewable energy' subsidies going to agrofuels, meet at 6.30pm outside the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC), 3 Whitehall Place, London SW1A 2AW, for details call 01224324797, email info@biofuelwatch.org.uk, see campaigncc.org, foodnotfuel.org.uk or biofuelwatch.org.uk.

13th Beat the Bankers, meet at 5.30pm outside Northern Rock, 1 Princess Street, Albert Square, Manchester M2 4DF, bring pots, pans, spoons, and make some noise in protest against the bankers.

17th Anti-arms demonstration at Brimar, manufacturers of a range of screens and viewing equipment used for military applications, at 12 noon in Manchester, see targetbrimar.org.uk for further details.

17th Oppose the English Defence League, meet at 4pm outside the YMCA, St Helen's Road, Swansea, see twitter.com/NewportCAR

17th and 18th The Great Climate Swoop, a mass blockade of at Ratcliffe-on-Soar in Nottinghamshire, one of the UK's biggest coal fired power stations, called for by The Camp for Climate Action, Plane Stupid, Rising Tide and Climate Rush, call 07932 096677 or see thegreatclimateswoop.org.
23rd Pre-Anarchist Bookfair special at Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX, downstairs will be screening of the new documentary *Colin Ward in Conversation with Roger Deakin*, upstairs the Revolutionary Anarcha-feminist Group from Dublin will be launching the latest issue of their magazine, both events from 7pm until late, call 020 7837 4473 or see housmans.com for details.

24th London Anarchist Bookfair at Queen Mary & Westfield College, Mile End Road, London E1 4NS, from 10am until 7pm, see anarchistbookfair.org.uk for details.

24th Bookfair after party at Freedom Press bookshop, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX, from 7pm until 11pm, see freedompress.org.uk for details.

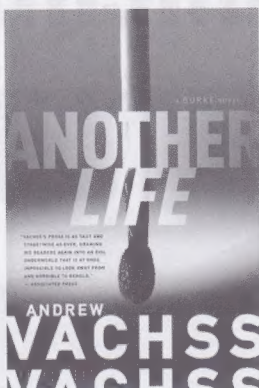
30th SchNEWS 15th Birthday benefit, celebrating 15 years and nearly 700 issues of the weekly direct action newsheet, at the Cowley Club, 12 London Road, Brighton BN1 4JA from 8pm, entry £4, call 01273 685 913 or see schnews.org.uk or cowleyclub.org.uk for more.

31st CAAT National Gathering from 9.45am until 5pm at Toynbee Studios, 28 Commercial Street, London E1 6AB, see caat.org.uk/events/nationalgathering for details.

NOVEMBER

12th to 17th NATO not welcome, action to shut down the NATO parliament assembly which is meeting in Edinburgh, see antimilitaristnetwork.org.uk or natowc.noflag.org.uk for more information.

BOOK



Another Life
by Andrew Vachss
(Vintage, 2009)

This novel closes contemporary crime fiction's most remarkable series, in which Vachss's New York protagonist Burke – no 'Christian' name and strictly Old Testament ethics – roots out perpetrators of sexual predation, exploitation and violence thanks to unrivalled understanding, born of bitter personal experience, of their origins and ramifications. With elective outlaw kin – early jailyard mentor, Black street philosopher and strategic genius the Prof, Chinese wise-woman restaurateur Mama, transsexual chameleon Michelle, mute Mongolian martial artist Max the Silent, and Jewish racist-hating technowizard Mole – he runs brutally sophisticated long-cons parting abusers from their money and enacting revenge with extreme prejudice on behalf of victims. Early targets gravitated towards gutter lowlives, red-lights and raincoats; gradually extending upwards through middle-class pimps and institutional panderers to corporate racketeers, ruling-class perverts and international nonce networks. Throughout, the tales turn truly transcendental via family parallels implacably and impeccably drawn with other vicious circles of misery that individual and societal failures of empathy foster.

Now, when *Another Life*'s minor Saudi royal schools his son in misogynistic sadism before the toddler goes missing, believed prey to a paedophile ring, top government spooks seek our (anti-)hero's help. He wouldn't normally touch with a bargepole anything tainted by the State, but the carrot is exemplary medical treatment for the Prof (mortally wounded in the previous instalment, *Terminal*). Perilous excavations of the child-slavery circuits which Burke is legendary for nailing yield another hardest-boiled yarn and a characteristically ambiguous upshot combining hope with nihilistic realism

regarding the case's wider significance. Added poignancy comes from Burke's yearning to help his clan's younger members thrive – not underground like himself, requiring super-human resilience to survive – yet, having been protected from such hardship, somehow weaning them with the wisdom to endure the cold world. As always, readers are left with pressing questions which, in principle, can be answered neither in Burke's bleak tongue nor the specious platitudes of respectable political or philosophical discourse.¹

Trojan horse noir

Vachss's characters are all loosely based on people met professionally (except with the evil villainy usually toned down) in tracking sexually-transmitted disease, relief work in Biafra, labour organising, and running a detention centre for violent juveniles, before combining crusading novelist and attorney exclusively representing children and youth. His campaigns have resulted in landmark legal upheavals – Thailand clamping down on child sex-tourism; American legal loopholes for parental abusers plugged – though he's crystal clear on the inadequacies of public and privatised justice and welfare. And whereas the author negotiates official nonsense nourished by hard-won counter-knowledge of its baleful logic, Burke builds his own lifeworld and pragmatic truths with no recourse to 'civilised' resources – the novels themselves being 'trojan horses' detailing real-world events and patterns long before mainstream media acknowledgement. An unflinching focus on extremes that others avoid surely risks problematically oversimplistic certainties, but this magnificent 18-strong series – beginning with *Flood* (1985) – also quite uniquely specifies the wilful complacent blindness of modern society in nurturing and perpetuating domination and oppression.²

www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk
<http://libcom.org/blog/4271>

1. Still less alternative philosophies of 'freedom' – such as that of Peter Lamborn Wilson, aka Hakim Bey, whose famous 'temporary autonomous zones' double more notoriously as ideological props for the sexual sociopathy of NAMBLA (the North-American Man-Boy Love Association); see Robert Helms, 'Paedophilia and American Anarchism' (available at libcom.org/library).
2. And, as a final bonus, *Another Life* even celebrates anarchism over fascism, communism or 'democracy', courtesy of one of Burke's old IWW cellmates (pages 120–123).

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. J.K. Rowling, for the Harry Potter series of books.
2. Alexander Radishchev (1749–1802). The Bolsheviks claimed him as their spiritual ancestor.
3. The nineteen-year reign (1134–1154) of the Norman King Stephen of England, a

- grandson of William the Conqueror, which was characterised by a continuous succession crisis. It's also known as the '19-year Winter'.
4. He was one of the coppers filmed assaulting protestor Nicola Fisher at the G20. He's been charged with assault.

Communities with intent

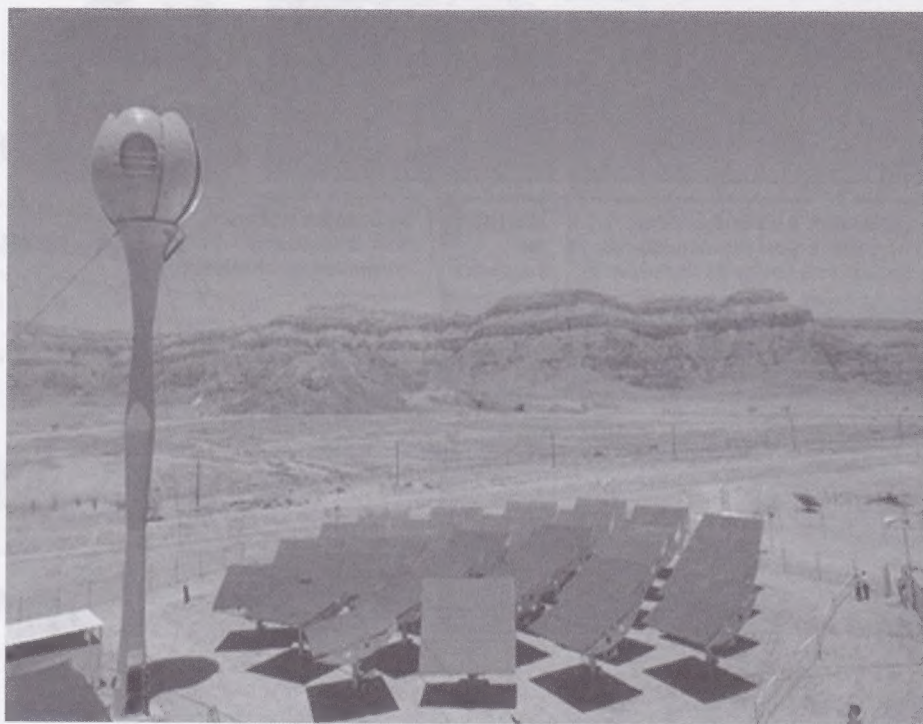
Robert Miller finds much food for thought in a new history of anarchist influence in the early Kibbutz Movement – one of official Zionism's 'best-kept secrets'

Most leftists, when they think of the history of Israel, think of the history of colonialism, aggression and violence committed against the Palestinians. But there is one aspect of Israeli history that holds great appeal and importance to anarchists, and to anyone wanting to create a just and democratic world. This is the Kibbutzim.

A Living Revolution: Anarchism In The Kibbutz Movement, written by James Horrox and recently published by AK Press, is an excellent history of the Kibbutzim. For those of you that do not know about the movement, a Kibbutz is "a voluntary, self-governing, community, administered democratically by its members with neither legal sanction nor any coercive authority." The Kibbutz is quite possibly the longest lasting anarchist society that exists now – it even managed to survive the creation of the Israeli state – and Horrox's book is essential reading for anyone who wants to know more about it.

The book also features an introduction by Uri Gordon, author of *Anarchy Alive!* and is divided nicely into chapters that run not only in chronological order, but also in the order of developments.

After the introduction, which explains a little bit about how the Kibbutzim were anarchist, chapter 1 looks at the beginnings of the Kibbutz movement. It explains the failures of the first Aliya (wave of immigration) and the reasons why the people involved in the second Aliya were so predominantly



Above, the world's first hybrid solar power station at Kibbutz Samar in southern Israel; below, Kibbutz Degania in the 1930s

socialists and anarchists. It also looks at the setting up of the first few Kibbutzim such as Degania and Merhaviah.

The second chapter looks at the ideologies of the Kibbutzniks who made up the second and third Aliya. It focuses specifically on A.D. Gordon, Franz Oppenheimer and Joseph Trumpeldor.

The third chapter focuses on the setting up of the various Kibbutzim and how the revolutionary dreams of the people discussed in chapter 2 came into reality. It starts by looking at Gustav Landauer and how he influenced the Zionist movement, and then moves onto discussing groups such as Hashomer Hatzair and how they set up Kibbutz such as Betanya and federations such as the Kibbutz Artzi Hashomar Hatzair

Federation. It then goes on to look at the Hapoel Hatzair Workers Party and the Gedud Ha-Avoda organisation.

The fourth and longest chapter discusses internal dynamics within the Kibbutz and explains what people's lives were like, as well as how the Kibbutz was organised. It explains how the Kibbutz was organised economically and politically by explaining the values that the Kibbutzim held, the institutions within them and how the Kibbutz' economic and political organisation changed and influenced the lives of the Kibbutzniks. It explains how the Kibbutzim managed to organise fairly and efficiently without authority or coercion, how they kept order without law and how the federations were organised.

Chapter 5 looks at how and why the Kibbutz began to abandon its original values and objectives that made them unique, looking at the betrayals they suffered, first by the British and then by the official Zionist movement of David Ben-Gurion. It then looks at the crisis of the 1980s when the Likud government came to power and Israeli society moved far towards the right wing. On the brighter side, this chapter also discusses the new organisations that are being set up with much the same values and aspirations as the original Kibbutzim. The organisations, such as Samar, Kvutza Yovel and Tnuat Bogrim, are building new Kibbutzim, very similar to the original Kibbutz movement.

The final chapter looks at the Israeli anarchist movement as a whole and how the





Review

◀ page 15

Kibbutz fits into it. It discusses many contemporary ideas of Israeli anarchism such as the no-state solution and the Arab-Jewish partnerships and analyses the attitudes of Israeli anarchists towards the Kibbutzim. There is also an epilogue that looks at the Ethiopian community in Israel and the Gadera community, which is based on the Kibbutzim and is providing an opportunity for Ethiopians, many of whom are not able to integrate into Israeli culture.

A Living Revolution is very well written and is extremely clear and concise. It has a plethora of facts and sources about the Kibbutzim and it is condensed into a very accessible and readable 150-page book. My

only criticism is that since so much information in so much detail is condensed into such a small book, it can be a little dry during the most information-heavy sections. But overall it flows very well and is very readable, interesting and inspiring. The Kibbutzim itself provides valuable lessons to anarchists as well as important inspiration to show that such societies are possible, and *A Living Revolution* provides an excellent history and explanation of the movement. This is an important and extremely valuable book and I recommend that every anarchist should read it.

A Living Revolution: Anarchism in the Kibbutz Movement by James Horrox (with Foreword by Uri Gordon), published by AK Press

THE QUIZ

1. According to Matt Latimer, a former speech writer for George W. Bush, who was blocked from receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom for the 'promotion of sorcery'?
2. Who has been described as the "first Russian radical"? Who dishonestly claimed him as their spiritual ancestor?
3. In historical terms, what was known as 'The Anarchy'?
4. What was Delroy Smellie charged with and why do we care?

Answers on page 14

The Anarchist Quiz Book compiled by Martin Howard with illustrations by Paul Petard is available from Freedom Press at £5 (post free).

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Protestor exercise



Ten different police forces were involved in the Iceni 5 public order exercise; below left, the City of London horse unit gets to grips with 'protesters'; below right, petrol bombs are thrown during the 'riot'.

Whilst officers were dealing with these issues, reports were then received of an incursion from outside Wethersfield Airport onto the airfield after protesters 'cut their way through' the fence line. Protesters again 'locked on' once they were on the airfield whilst others attempted to evade capture when police arrived.

A further contingent of 30 to 40 protesters was also outside the fence line when officers arrived and attempted to breach the police cordon when it was established.

At the same time that these issues were developing, intelligence was also received that some ringleaders were intending to cause more serious disorder and had a stockpile of petrol bombs at an address in Cannon Circle. A specialist team then had to execute a search warrant at the house, which involved forcing entry and then arresting several individuals.

Word of this raid and the arrests of the protest leaders then filtered through to protesters, causing public disorder to escalate. Offenders intent on causing trouble then infiltrated two areas of the airfield and used petrol bombs against the PSUs.

To further complicate issues, the entire exercise was followed by a team of journalists, camera operators and photographers who were briefed to get in

amongst the action and approach both sides for interviews. Individual officers and Bronze Commanders were faced with well-equipped camera crews and radio journalists, asking for their reactions or comments as they were dealing with the unfolding scenario – increasing the pressure on them. The media were able to get interviews and reactions from demonstrators, protest leaders and members of the public in order to comment on the police activity in 'real-time' which also added to the level of scrutiny experienced by senior officers during media interviews.

Chief Inspector Yates said: "The exercise was very demanding and certainly put everyone involved through some very tough tests. It was designed to stretch the police response and as such it had to examine the most extreme public order situations that officers could face.

"Although I think it should be pointed out that the exercise theme was used to give direction and narrative and in no way suggests that all the scenarios tested are going to occur at any real-life protest connected to this issue."

A full debrief on Exercise Iceni 5 has yet to be carried out, but Chief Inspector Yates said that initial feedback had been very positive and some important learning points were already emerging:

"We had two Assistant Chief Constables from Northumbria and Essex at the exercise and they have both said that it was very good and considerably better than most, if not all, they have been to.

"The enhanced media element certainly went well with reporters and camera operators saying that they were treated fairly, courteously and professionally and that there was a general feeling that officers recognised that the media had a job to do."

